

# DIRTY BOMB DISASTER RESPONSE

## **Background:**

A dirty bomb is a mix of explosives with radioactive powder or pellets. The blast from the explosives can carry radioactive materials away from the site of the explosion into an area of several city blocks. The extent of the contaminated area depends on the size and sophistication of the bomb, the type of radioactive material used, and the weather conditions. A dirty bomb is not the same as an atomic bomb or nuclear weapon; it does not create an atomic blast.

## **Impact of Dirty Bombs:**

- The main danger of a dirty bomb is from the explosion itself.
- Dirty bombs usually release limited amounts of radiation but not enough to affect anyone immediately.
- The blast could kill people in the immediate area and spread contamination of radiation around neighboring areas.

<b>What are the exposure risks?</b>	<b>Symptoms of Radiation Exposure:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Radiation cannot be seen, smelled, felt, or tasted; therefore, you may be exposed without even knowing it. Police and firefighters will check for radiation and determine how much is present and if it could cause any danger</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Higher levels may produce symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and swelling and redness of the skin</li><li>• Low levels of exposure (such as those caused by a dirty bomb) do not cause symptoms</li><li>• If you develop any of the symptoms, get medical attention</li></ul>

## **If you are Exposed to a Dirty Bomb:**

### **Outside and close to the incident:**

- ☐ Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth to avoid breathing radioactive dust or smoke.
- ☐ Don't touch objects thrown off by explosion, they may be radioactive.
- ☐ Go into a building where the walls and windows have not been damaged. Take off your outer layers of clothing and seal these in a plastic bag.
- ☐ Stay tuned to local radio or television for instructions and updates from officials.
- ☐ If you are close to your home, office or public building, go there immediately and go inside right away.
- ☐ Wash body and hair with soap and water.

### **Inside and close to the incident:**

- ☐ Stay inside unless you are told to leave by officials.
- ☐ Shut all windows, turn off heat or air conditioning, and stay near the center of the building or go to the basement.

- ☐ If exterior walls or windows are broken, go to an interior room.

### **In a car when the incident happens:**

- ☐ Close the windows and turn off the air
- ☐ Turn off the engine and listen to the radio for instructions from officials.
- ☐ Stay in the car until you are told by officials that it is safe to get back on the road.
- ☐ Turn off fans and heating and air conditioning systems that bring air in from the outside.
- ☐ Wash body and hair with soap and water.
- ☐ If you cannot get to a building safely, pull over to the side of the road and stop in the safest place possible.

### **General Protective Actions:**

- ☐ Do not eat any fresh products that may be contaminated with radiation particles.
- ☐ If you were near the site and injured, seek medical immediate medical attention.



# DIRTY BOMB DISASTER RESPONSE



District of Columbia Government  
Produced by:  
Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA)

**Last Modified: November, 2011**

